

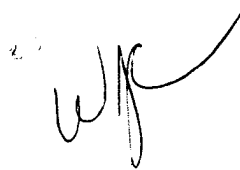
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DCI



George Bush on Yuri Andropov

The attached interview with the
Vice President may be of interest to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'WJR'.

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CONFIDENTIAL

George Bush on Yuri Andropov

By Godfrey Sperling Jr.

Washington

Vice-President Bush is not predicting a thaw in US-Soviet relations. But, because Soviet leader Yuri Andropov may be especially well informed about the US, Mr. Bush believes an improvement of ties may be possible.

In a 40-minute, year-end Monitor interview in his White House office, Mr. Bush had this to say:

Q: You've just been to Moscow for Brezhnev's funeral. How do you read the mood there?

A: They've said publicly and they've said to us that they have a desire to have improved relations. They treated us very well and, in a protocol sense, outstandingly. They accorded us courtesies far above the rank of vice-president.

My view on Andropov is that some people make this KGB thing sound horrendous. Maybe I speak defensively as a former head of the CIA. But leave out the operational side of KGB — the naughty things they allegedly do: Here's a man who has had access to a tremendous amount of intelligence over the years.

In my judgment he would be much less apt to misread the intentions of the United States. And you know and I know and the Democrats and the Republicans in the US would just not go out and make war on the Soviet Union. And that is something which I think a political boss out of a Vladivostok or a Leningrad might be less apt to know than a man who ran the intelligence organization.

That offers potential. And the other side of that is he's tough. And he appears to have solidified his leadership

ABM treaty and everything else. So there is this whole kind of feeling out there. And those of us who know the President's position so well probably haven't been as articulate as we might have been in trying to make people understand that this President is absolutely convinced that we must achieve a reduction, a real demonstrable, visible, verifiable reduction in nuclear weapons.

Q: Why isn't this perceived?

A: Well, if it weren't accompanied with the President's requirement that there be a strengthening of the United States defense, it would be. But it's the

Washington letter

last caveat that causes people to say that "It's a ruse; he doesn't really feel that way"

I don't question people's integrity in this. They just don't know how strongly the President feels about all this. And I do. I see him, talk to him — with people and alone.

Q: Does [Andropov's] own organization dabble in the gathering of accurate information that would enable him to have accurate knowledge about the Soviet weaknesses?

A: All I would guess, based on my understanding of the intelligence apparatus, is that the person who had exposure to that would be more apt to have the objective data than one who dealt all his life with the propaganda machinery or with the party network. Not that Andropov isn't part of the party.

Q: But does he have access to the information necessary to get at the real facts about Russia?

A: I think he has